
CIRM applauds decision to reject lawsuit that could have halted federal funding for stem cell research

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San Francisco, Calif.—The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the state stem cell agency, applauds today's decision by the District Court for the District of Columbia, which dismissed a lawsuit that threatened to halt the ability of federal agencies to fund human embryonic stem cell research.

"The field of stem cell research depends on a stable source of funding, such as CIRM provides in California. Young scientists uncertain about future funding might opt to work in areas other than stem cell science, which could slow progress toward new cures," said CIRM Chair Jonathan Thomas. "This ruling is a positive step, but with the possibility that the case might be appealed, a predictable source of state and private funding continues to be essential."

The lawsuit, brought by adult stem cell researchers, argued that because human embryonic stem cells come from human embryos left over from in vitro fertilization, federal funding of research using those cells violate the Dickey-Wicker amendment, which prohibits federal funding for research that harms human embryos.

The court sided with the defendants who argued that the Court must follow the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia's April 29, 2011 opinion finding that the NIH Guidelines should be given deference because they reasonably interpret the Dickey-Wicker amendment to permit federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research, as long as the funds are not used to derive new stem cell lines.

CIRM President Alan Trounson said that stem cell scientists in California have had a stable source of funding during the past year when the lawsuit was being decided. "California scientists have been able to carry on with research toward therapies for HIV/AIDS, diabetes, sickle cell disease and spinal cord injury, among others, without worrying about disruptions in their funding. With federal dollars available these scientists can leverage results from CIRM grants to get additional federal capital and can tap into potential collaborators in other states who bring expertise that could speed progress toward stem cell-based therapies."

Roman Reed, whose 1994 football injury led to California's Roman Reed spinal cord injury research act, celebrated the decision. "Today's ruling opens the door for US to lead the world in stem cell research for cure," he said, "This ensures the hope that we will one day have the cures we so desperately need."

The plaintiffs have 60 days to appeal the decision to the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

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